



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission Centre

June 2024

Holy Ascension Orthodox Church Child Safe Code of Conduct

Introduction

The purpose of this Child Safe Code of Conduct is to give effect to the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety* and thereby help our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers make Holy Ascension Orthodox Church a safe place for children. It should be read in conjunction with the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Definitions

Key terms in this *Child Safe Code of Conduct* are defined in the parish *Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety*.

Statement of Commitment to Child Safety

Our clergy and Parish Committee are committed to the safety and wellbeing of children.

For the children who belong to or visit our parish, we will provide a child safe environment. This means that we will act to ensure that children feel safe, are safe, and can participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish.

We have zero tolerance for any form of harm to or abuse of children. This includes emotional abuse, neglect, physical abuse, and sexual abuse.

Our parish is multi-cultural and brings together families and individuals of diverse backgrounds, experiences, and needs. We value both our unity and our diversity and are committed to words and actions that make this clear to our children and the children who visit us.

We have publicly available policies and procedures in place to support these commitments, and we will provide our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers with the necessary information, training, and other resources to ensure that they are met.

We take allegations and safety concerns seriously and will deal with them promptly and respectfully. They will be handled in accordance with our policies and procedures and, whenever necessary, Victorian, and other applicable Australian law.

We will engage sensitively with survivors of abuse and actively seek their input into our policies, procedures, and training.

All who belong to or visit our parish will be advised of our commitment to child safety and of their role in ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children while here.



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission Centre

Children's Participation

Our Orthodox Christian tradition is rich and multi-faceted. In the life of our parish, we preserve rites and customs developed over many centuries and in significantly different cultural settings. We value these things, the living expression of our Orthodox Christian Faith, as a precious inheritance that we, in turn, hope to pass to our children and to their children.

To make this possible, we want our children to participate appropriately, actively, and confidently in the divine services and in the broader life of our parish. To this end, we will answer their questions, listen to their views, respect what they say, and provide them with opportunities to learn, read, sing, serve, and help.

Application of this Code of Conduct

The standards set out in this Child Safe Code of Conduct apply to the interactions in parish life with children of our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers.

Acceptable conduct

To give effect to this commitment, those working with children will:

- Create a safe, culturally safe, and inclusive environment for all children and young people
- Actively promote cultural safety of children and young people who identify as First Nations people
- Treat all children with warmth and respect
- Listen to children and respond to their needs
- Contact a child outside church activities only when strictly necessary in connection with those activities, and then only through a parent or guardian
- Adhere to our child safe policies and procedures and to all applicable Victorian and Australian law
- Participate in all training and development activities deemed necessary by the Diocese or the Parish to make the Parish a safe place for children
- Immediately report and act on any concerns or observed breaches of this Code of Conduct
- Report any concerns that a child may be at risk of harm or abuse
- Take a child seriously if they disclose harm or abuse
- Take all reasonable steps to protect children from abuse
- Respect the privacy of children and their families and only disclose information to people who have a need to know



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission Centre

Unacceptable conduct

Those working with children will not:

- condone or participate in illegal, unsafe, or abusive behaviour towards children, including physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, ill-treatment, neglect, or grooming
- ignore or disregard any concerns, suspicions, or disclosures of child abuse
- fail to report information to police if they suspect a child has been abused
- trivialise child abuse issues
- use hurtful, discriminatory, or offensive behaviour or language with children
- persistently criticise or denigrate a child
- encourage a child to communicate with them in a private setting
- do things of a personal nature for children that they can do themselves
- show favouritism through the provision of gifts or particular attention

For priests hearing confessions and giving pastoral guidance

A priest must be “an example to the believers in word, in conduct, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity.” (1 Timothy 4:12)

To this end, in pastoral work with people of all ages our clergy have undertaken to:

- Build healthy and clearly defined pastoral relationships based on trust and mutual respect
- Guide them in the Orthodox Christian spiritual life with patience, kindness, empathy, and impartiality
- Take particular care to observe discretion and pastoral caution should it become necessary to discuss matters of sexual behaviour, whether in explaining church teaching or providing guidance in the context of confession

In addition, in dealings with the faithful our clergy will not:

- Impose any moral or other requirements that go beyond the Holy Scriptures, the precepts of the Holy Fathers, and the canonical tradition of the Orthodox Church
- Require unquestioning obedience
- Discourage access to any preventative, curative or palliative medical care or treatment recommended by health professionals, other than in circumstances when the care or treatment proposed is fundamentally incompatible with the teaching of the Orthodox Church
- Involve himself improperly in their lives
- Foster an exclusive environment in opposition to other pastors and parishes or the higher church authorities, thereby encouraging suspicion and isolation
- Use his authority to promote political views
- Attempt to improperly influence the faithful in such matters as



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission Centre

- A choice or field of study
- Obtaining or leaving employment
- A place of residence
- A decision to marry or the choice of a future marriage partner
- A decision to pursue the monastic life

Interaction with parish children outside parish life

Our Parish and the wider Orthodox Christian community are small, and our people are bound by family and social connections that extend beyond church life. When interacting with Parish children at family and social gatherings outside parish life, our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers must continue to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this *Child Safe Code of Conduct*.

Interactions with one's own children in church life

When interacting with ***their own children*** in the context of church life, our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers must conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this *Child Safe Code of Conduct*.

Complaint handling and reporting obligations

All clergy, office-bearers, volunteers, parish members and visitors are encouraged to speak up if they have concerns about conduct that adversely affects the safety of children in our parish. Complaints about a breach of this *Child Safe Code of Conduct* must be reported to one of our two Child Safety Contact Persons. Some breaches of this *Child Safe Code of Conduct* may need to be reported to Victoria Police, the Department of Justice and Community Safety and the Commission for Children and Young People. Our *Child Safe Complaints Management Procedure* provides more information about our reporting obligations to external authorities as well as describing protections and obligations for anyone making a report.

Consequences of breach

Our clergy, office-bearers, and volunteers who breach this *Child Safe Code of Conduct* will be subject to disciplinary action. This can include a written warning, increased supervision, appointment to an alternative role, suspension from a role, or dismissal from a role. In breaches involving parish clergy, the matter will be referred to the Diocesan Bishop for consideration and may, in addition to the disciplinary measures mentioned above, involve canonical penalties.

List of related documents

The following parish documents are related to this Code of Conduct:

- Child Safe Policy and Statement of Commitment to Child Safety
- Child Safety Contact Person position description
- Child Safe Complaints Management Procedure
- Child Safe discussion points for Parish Council meetings



Holy Ascension Orthodox Christian Mission Centre

The following Diocesan policies are relevant to this Code of Conduct:

- [The Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: Child Safe Policy](#)
- [The Australian and New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia: Code of Conduct](#)

Monitoring and review

With the assistance of the Child Safety Contact Persons, this Code of Conduct will be reviewed annually by the Parish Committee, and prior to the convening of the parish Annual General Meeting. To the extent possible, review of the statement will consider comments and suggestions from children; parish clergy, office-bearers, volunteers, and members; the Commission for Children and Young People; the Diocesan authorities; and the parish insurer. We will particularly endeavour to draw on the experience of survivors of abuse in our own Orthodox Christian community here in Australia. Consideration will also be given to information prepared by organisations advocating for child safety.

Affirmation

I have read this Child Safe Code of Conduct for working with children in parish life.

I understand my responsibilities in working with children and undertake to abide by this Child Safe Code of Conduct.

If I breach this Child Safe Code of Conduct in any way, for any reason, I will immediately inform the parish priest and Child Safe Contact Persons of my actions and the reasons for them.

Name:

Signature:

Date: